

PORTRAITS OF PARTNERSHIP

Common Vision
Shared Values
Joint Action

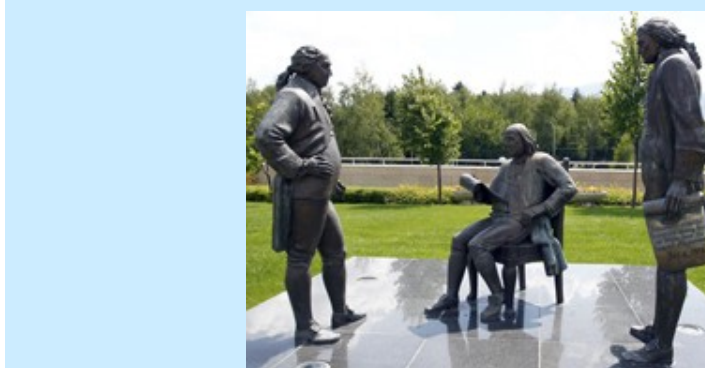


U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

"The 360 Degree View from Sofia"



We welcome readers to this month's e-Newsletter, and we invite you to notice the new name for this edition: *The 360 degree View from Sofia*. The intent of this new name is to convey the idea that we would like to present our experiences here in Bulgaria from all angles and not simply from a single point of view or vantage point. In essence, this e-Newsletter represents a wide range of activities resulting from our strategic partnership which includes American and Bulgarians working together here in Bulgaria and also Bulgarians and their own personal and professional experiences in the U.S. In this issue, you will see that we try to cover both these directions. This month has been highlighted by several cultural events which brought to Bulgaria the best of America in both very traditional and very modern art forms.



Announcing: The Democracy Video Challenge

Once again, the State Department is sponsoring a project called the "Democracy Video Challenge." The objective of this project is to provide opportunities for members of the general public over the age of 18 to produce a video that completes the phrase, "Democracy is..." The winners will receive an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., New York, and Hollywood where they will attend gala screenings of the winning videos, meet democracy advocates from government, the media, and civil society, and receive exposure to filmmakers and the U.S. film and television industry. The general public will determine the winning videos based on on-line voting. Please see the link for more information on this fantastic opportunity. www.videochallenge.america.gov.



In the News



U.S. Provides USD 6 Million for Transparency in Extractive Industries

On September, 24, the United States contributed USD 6 million to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) trust fund facility. This contribution underscores the U.S. commitment to promote revenue transparency around the world, and the EITI (part of Transparency International) is an ideal vehicle for this program to foster good governance and to cultivate effective development in resource-rich countries. The EITI calls for full, public disclosure and verification of oil, gas, and mining company payments to host governments and disclosure of the host governments' revenues from these industries. This is especially important in Bulgaria, in particular in its role as an energy transit hub. We look forward to working with the Government of Bulgaria to promote and support EITI in this country.

*** Special Feature ***

The American Dream Comes True for Two Bulgarian Students

How could Oregon leave a memorable imprint on the heart of two Bulgarian students? The entire adventure started with a U.S. "J-1" visa application, a great curiosity for the world unknown, and an eagerness to experience America. This was the story of Anna and Daniel who departed for the U.S. in 2004 with mixed feelings and expectations as they began their internship at a horticultural company in Oregon. They experienced an emotional year full of obstacles and opportunities, but also professional success and personal joy.

As they neared the end of their university studies, Anna and Daniel decided to join an internship program in the U.S. in order to gain on-hands experience in the horticulture industry. This decision eventually took them to the State of Oregon. While overcoming the cultural and language barrier proved to be difficult enough, the work ethic at the company where they worked and the appreciation that both of them received by their U.S. managers motivated them to give their best effort. This paid off as their dedication led to improved knowledge and skills in this industry. Anna and Daniel's actual contribution to the company was quite significant and long-lasting—Anna put together the company's intern brochure which is still used to train interns, while Daniel, who from the outset was in charge of horticultural pest research, compiled a manual on pest control that the company sorely needed.



Today, Anna Yordanova and Daniel Yordanov are a family and successful professionals in Bulgaria. They started a small landscaping company last year, Progressive Design, which has managed to remain above water despite the economic crisis. At the same time, they are pursuing their

own special interests: an IT career and a passion for music: Anna is a software developer at a bank while Daniel plays the guitar in two start-up rock bands. "We are doing surprisingly well, much better than we had ever expected under the circumstances and considering our young age," said Anna. She added that key to their current success is the optimism and the firm belief that everything is possible, something their American experience taught them. Yet, behind each success story hides a lot of pressure to cope with hard work, but work that ultimately brings gratification and a sense of achievement. Both Anna and Daniel treasure their work experience in Oregon, and highly recommend that experience to any university graduate who is looking for high-quality professional experiences abroad.



In the News

American Dancers to Compete at 10th edition of “Jam on It”



The hip-hop dance troupe “Urban Artistry” participated and competed in the 10th edition of the “Jam on It” Festival in Smolyan during September. “Urban Artistry” is based in Washington, D.C. and consists of dancers, musicians, and historians who work as ambassadors of urban art and dance culture. This event was part of a wide range of cultural activities that have received support by the U.S. Embassy in Sofia. During the festival, this dance troupe not only competed but also held workshops with dance enthusiasts who attended to Smolyan event. The embassy was proud to have young Americans who are members of the troupe come to Bulgaria and share their enthusiasm and passion for this dance form.



Dance Moves Defy Gravity!!!

U.S. Embassy Celebrates 25th Edition of the Apollonia Festival with American Jazz

Ari Roland Quartet

During this year’s Apollonia Festival, the Ari Roland Quartet performed to sell-out crowds at the OBB Club in Sozopol on Friday, September 4th. This concert was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy and featured several classic hits admired by music lovers in the U.S. and abroad. The talented members of this quartet hails from New York City and have performed in concerts worldwide.



In the Spotlight

Peace Corps Volunteer – from Winnetka, Illinois to Topolovgrad, Bulgaria

Like many Peace Corps Volunteers in Bulgaria, Kelsey Dippold yearned to travel beyond the U.S. borders and learn about cultures in other countries. That is exactly what Kelsey has found herself doing here in Bulgaria for over 2 years. "I have had an incredible time in Bulgaria and it is due wholly to the generosity and openness of the Bulgarians I have met." While in Topolovgrad, Kelsey is involved with development work for the Association of Youth Initiatives and Tolerance "Just Friends." She also said that as a way of passing time and to become a closer member of the community, she has learned to knit. As she says, Now my babas and leylas all want to show me how to knit their patterns, some even knitting baby clothes for the children that I hope to have in the future." There is no doubt Kelsey will leave many friends behind when she finally departs Bulgaria who will wish her a safe trip home and quick return back to Bulgaria.



TDA Grant Awarded to United Medical

On September 11, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (TDA) awarded a grant worth over USD 260,000 to United Medical EAD that will assist the company in evaluating its expansion plans in Bulgaria. These plans are intended to translate into improved health care opportunities for citizens in Bulgaria. The TDA has a long history working in Bulgaria, and this particular grant demonstrates the continued commitment that TDA to Bulgaria and its citizens.



More photos from "Urban Artistry" Dancers and Workshop



Additional photos from page two "American Dream"



The U.S. Embassy Sofia will be closed for Veteran's Day Holiday on Wednesday, November 11

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